

Keeping a Basal Body Temperature Chart

Temperature

Basal body temperature is the baseline temperature that your body experiences at pure rest and it reflects the levels of certain hormones in our body. During the first half of the cycle estrogen keeps the temperature relatively low - usually around 97.5°.

Progesterone, when it dominates during the second half of the cycle, causes the temperature to be relatively high - usually above 98°. All activity will raise the temperature after you get out of bed and throughout your day. So in order to get an accurate basal body temp, you have to take it first thing when you wake- before you do anything, even pee.

The rules for recording your basal body temperature are:

- 1- Take your temperature first thing upon awakening- *before* you do any activity, even getting out of bed. Even before you get out of bed just to pee.
- 2- A digital thermometer is preferred because it gives you a decimal point reading
- 3- Take your temperature orally. If it is necessary to take your temp vaginally, we will instruct you to do so.
- 4- Take your temperature at the same time every day within an hour if possible. If you sleep in or get up earlier, note it on the chart. You must take it after *three consecutive hours* of sleep. This means that if you wake up at 5:30 and need to pee, but usually record temp upon waking at 7, take your temp at 5:30 before you pee.

Cervical Fluid

Cervical Fluid is one of the most important ways to check for optimal fertility. Fertile cervical fluid changes the ph of your vagina slightly, provide a medium for the sperm to swim easily and provide an environment for the sperm to undergo molecular changes so they may easily penetrate and fertilize an egg. Pasty, dry, white, or yellow cervical fluid is not considered fertile cervical fluid. If you look at it inside a microscope, it will look fragmented like shards of broken glass and disorganized lines. Slippery and wet cervical fluid appears during the couple of fertile days in the cycle and resembles the consistency of egg-whites. Under a microscope you see cells in the shapes of fern leaves, gently waving in the wet fluid. These fern leaves move to project the sperm up the pathway. Your goal is to learn when you have this slippery, 'ferning' cervical fluid. It will be most noticeable the few days before the rise in basal temperatures and lets you know that it is time to try to conceive.

The rules of observing cervical fluid are:

- 1- Begin after the period ends.
- 2- Try to check it every time you use the bathroom. Kegels can help move the fluid down to the vaginal opening where you can feel it. Check it at least three times a day, morning, noon, and night.
- 3- Separate your vaginal lips and check for the cervical fluid at the lower opening, closest to your perineum either with a tissue or with your fingers. Glance away and rub your fingers together to assess whether it feels dry, sticky, or slippery. Slowly open the fingers to see if the fluid stretches and if so, how far before it breaks.
- 4- Don't check when you are sexually aroused, the lubricant your vagina produces in preparation for sex is different from your cervical fluid. Also, learn to tell the difference

between cervical fluid and semen. Semen is rubbery and whitish or foamy and dries quickly and becomes brittle. Cervical fluid is clear, shimmery and stretchy.

- 5- Note how your underwear feels and looks throughout the day. Very fertile fluid tends to leave circular round marks because of its high content of water. Unfertile cervical fluid tends to form more of a rectangular square or a line of dry or crumbly fluid on your underwear.
- 6- Around your fertile time, check the water in the toilet – very fertile cervical fluid may slip out into the water and it forms a ball like a marble and floats down in the water. This is because fertile cervical fluid is not water soluble. Other vaginal secretions will dissolve in water.
- 7- Cervical fluid is also more likely to flow out during a bowel movement because of the pushing down and out. You may be able to feel it more easily after a bowel movement.
- 8- If you can't feel it at the vaginal opening, you can insert your fingers to feel the cervix itself. Your vagina will always feel wet inside so don't mistake this for cervical fluid.

Cervical Position

The cervix changes positions throughout the cycle, and you can learn to tell the difference between high and low, soft and firm, open and closed. During ovulation, the cervix will rise, soften to feel like your lips, and open slightly. After ovulation, the cervix drops into the vagina farther and feels more firm like your nose. Once you get used to the changes in your cervix, you may only want or need to check it once a week.

The rules for checking cervical position are:

- 1- Start checking the day after menstruation is over.
- 2- Always wash your hands first. Many women find that checking it right after they shower in the morning is a convenient time. It helps to check it at the same time of each day.
- 3- The most effective position to check it is squatting because it pushes the cervix down into the vagina nearer to the opening. You may also put a leg up on a chair or sit on the toilet. Use the same position each time because each position will push the cervix down into a different position.
- 4- Insert a finger into your vagina and feel for your cervix and look for these things – Height in the vagina (low, midway, or high), Softness (firm, medium, or soft), Opening (closed, partly open, open), Wetness (might as well check the slipperiness of the cervical fluid while you're feeling the cervix).

Other things to record:

Many other daily activities can alter the temperature and give you false readings such as

- taking Advil or other NSAIDs
- staying up later than usual
- drinking alcohol
- exercising more than usual
- having a fever or feeling sick
- extreme stress

Recording these will help the interpretation of your chart- often times erratic temperatures can be explained by one of the above and are not part of a menstrual health concern.